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CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE ON SUBSTANTIVE QUESTIONS (PROGRAMME MATTERS)

REPORT OF THE ACC INTERSECRETARIAT GROUP FOR WATER RESOURCES ON ITS THIRTEENTH SESSION

(United Nations Headquarters, New York, 7-9 October 1992)

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I. MATTERS BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE ON SUBSTANTIVE QUESTIONS (PROGRAMME MATTERS)

A. Report on the second meeting of the Steering Committee for Water Supply and Sanitation

(Agenda item 3)

1. The Secretary of the Steering Committee for Water Supply and Sanitation introduced the report on the Committee's second meeting, held at United Nations Headquarters on 5 and 6 October 1992. He highlighted the conclusions reached and proposals made during the meeting of the Committee under its main agenda items.

2. With regard to the future work of the Steering Committee, it was agreed that it should continue to play a key role in maintaining a high visibility for water supply and sanitation, both nationally and internationally. The work of the Steering Committee would continue vigorously under the chairmanship of Mr. G. Arthur Brown, pending the ongoing restructuring of the United Nations Secretariat and the review of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) structure. The meeting agreed that an assessment of the past work of the Steering Committee should be undertaken to develop a forward-looking and innovative strategy. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Development, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank would form a task force with a view to reporting to the Committee on that question. A first draft would be completed by the end of March 1993. It would then be circulated for comments to other Committee members and to selected members of the Collaborative Council for Water Supply and Sanitation. A first document would then be available for the Collaborative Council Meeting, to be held in Rabat in September 1993. The draft would also be circulated to the regional commissions for comments through the Department of Economic and Social Development.

3. The Steering Committee agreed that its interaction with the Collaborative Council should be strengthened, with particular emphasis on action at the national and regional levels, and that appropriate action should be taken as soon as possible. There was also a consensus that the Steering Committee should act as intermediary between the Collaborative Council for Water Supply and Sanitation and the United Nations system.

4. With regard to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), it was agreed that the Steering Committee should form an informal working group to study funding sources for water supply and sanitation activities and that the group should interact with the Collaborative Council for Water Supply and Sanitation in order to develop a strategy for fund-raising, taking into consideration the potential of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF). The Steering Committee also recognized that the International Conference on Water and the Environment (Dublin,

26-31 January 1992) had been a very successful event and had enhanced cooperation by stressing common technical priority issues which had had an impact on UNCED.

5. With regard to information, education and communication (IEC), the Steering Committee agreed that a strategy should be developed through cooperation with the Collaborative Council IEC Core Group. The strategy should address several key issues, including the need for a clear message; the need to formulate policies at the national level; the need to establish a linkage between monitoring and advocacy; the need to strengthen efforts to respond to the requirements for technical information and advocacy; the need for resources for the proposed core group; and the utilization of existing information channels, such as Source and the Natural Resources Forum.

B. Strengthening of coordination and cooperation in the field of water resources

(Agenda item 5)

1. Review of the work of the Steering Committee for Water Supply and Sanitation and of the Intersecretariat Group for Water Resources (agenda item 5 (a))

6. The members of the Intersecretariat Group welcomed the agreement, reached at the second meeting of the Steering Committee for Water Supply and Sanitation, that the Committee should mantain its present form until a final decision had been taken concerning the future of the ACC structure and should conduct an assessment of its work since its inception, with a view to providing a sound basis for the development of a forward-looking strategy to streamline its work.

7. There was also a consensus on the need to undertake a similar evaluation of the work of the Intersecretariat Group for Water Resources, with a view to making it as responsive as possible to the needs of the organizations of the United Nations system and to the international community at large, in the light of the major issues being faced in the 1990s. The members of the Group agreed that such an evaluation should be conducted in the light of both the results of the consultations concerning the ongoing restructuring of the United Nations Secretariat and the review of the ACC structure.

2. Cooperation with external support agencies, non-governmental organizations and other organizations (agenda item 5 (b))

8. The members of the Group recognized the need to establish links with the Collaborative Council for Water Supply and Sanitation, external support agencies, non-governmental organizations and other organizations outside the United Nations system, with a view to expanding the scope of international cooperation, particularly in the light of the recommendations stemming from UNCED. It was agreed that the possibility of establishing such links could be part of the evaluation of the work of the Group.

C. Follow-up action on issues stemming from the International Conference on Water and the Environment and the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

(Agenda item 6)

1. Monitoring and assessing the world's freshwater resources (agenda item 6 (a))

9. Document ACC/ISGW/1992/4 contained a proposal for system-wide action concerning the integrated monitoring of basic indicators on the state of the world's freshwater resources. The document addressed the widely recognized lack of information on freshwater resources on the regional and global scales and the serious limitations this imposed on capabilities for assessing the state of the world's water resources on a regular and continuing basis. For example, records of the flows of many of the world's rivers were not available and water-use data were absent for many regions. These water resources assessment problems impaired policy formulation, hindered development efforts and rendered more difficult the effective follow-up of Agenda 21 (A/CONF.151/26/Rev.1 (Vol. I).

10. In introducing the report, the Secretary of the Group expressed the view that there was an urgent need to integrate existing programmes and to establish a system for integrating information, in order to enable the organizations of the system to monitor issues concerning the state of the freshwater resources of the world in a meaningful manner. This would entail the establishment of a computerized system for consolidating information from other systems in a common format and the formulation of a strategic approach to a reiterative process for the selection of areas or regions to be included in the system according to some basic indicators. It would be necessary to design a system that would start modestly and gradually grow in coverage based on the demand for information, concentrating as far as possible on regions estimated to be at risk of facing serious water problems. The Secretary suggested that, to the extent possible, information should be managed on the basis of geographical units, preferably the watershed or groundwater basin, although in some cases information could only be gathered on the basis of political administrative regions or at the national level.

11. The establishment of an integrated system for monitoring would require a careful consideration of existing databases to determine their potential contribution to the system and the technical considerations involved in establishing a hardware and software system capable of incorporating the data in a common format. It would also require an identification of information gaps in existing programmes in order to determine whether additional data should be gathered. In addition, there would be a need to establish a set of criteria for the selection of areas to be incorporated in the system. The report recommended that a task force or working group composed of members of the Intersecretariat Group be organized to review existing databases in order to determine their relevance to the system; identify gaps in information and formulate proposals for obtaining the missing data; review the hardware and

software requirements to make such a system compatible with existing systems; formulate criteria for a strategic selection of areas tc be incorporated in the system; and propose a mechanism for the establishment, operation and maintenance of the monitoring system.

12. The members of the Group recognized that, while water resources data were essential for analysis and policy formulation at the national level, and every effort needed to be made to strengthen national capabilities in that regard, there was also an urgent need for analysis at the global level. This was particularly the case in view of the need for effective follow-up of the recommendations of Agenda 21 of UNCED. There was a consensus that, in spite of the data available in various databases, currently the capability to make a meaningful assessment of the state of the freshwater resources of the world did not exist. The members of the Group agreed on the importance of establishing a system capable of integrating available information concerning various aspects of water resources development and utilization.

13. The Group felt that this was a most important area requiring close collaboration of the organizations concerned. It was aware of the complexities involved in developing an integrated database system and that it would require the commitment of financial resources. Consequently, the participants stressed the need to proceed in a gradual and incremental manner, with well-defined objectives. Such a system should be flexible and demand driven at all times, in order to ensure its relevance to the needs of the international community.

14. The members of the Group agreed on the importance of establishing a suitable methodology for carrying out work in this area, in order to define its focus and ensure its relevance. In this regard, it was noted that activities relevant to this exercise were being carried out in other places, such as within the Danube and the Mekong Commissions. Thus, it would be essential to take into account the methodological approaches being taken elsewhere. The representative of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) informed the Group about the work being carried out jointly with the World Bank towards the establishment of a network of hydrological stations in Africa (WHYCOS-Africa), which is part of the World Hydrological Cycle Observing System (WHYCOS).

15. The members of the Intersecretariat Group agreed to consider at its next session measures that should be taken towards the possible establishment of a system-wide integrated monitoring and assessment network. It also envisaged the possibility of convening an expert consultation at a later stage. They decided to establish a working group under the chairmanship of WMO, composed of members of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UNICEF, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), WHO, the World Bank and WMO. The working group was entrusted with the task of identifying existing relevant databases so as to define the issues involved in integrating their data, including such questions as the division of databases into those concerned with the resource itself and those dealing with its use; and

identifying the various elements that should be considered in defining the basic methodology for the system, such as health, economic indicators, land-use indicators, food production and population, as well as the ways in which those indicators should be classified and managed. The working group would consider the steps to be taken in the preparatory phases of the process concerning methodological approaches, with a view to making recommendations to the Intersecretariat Group, including estimates of the financial resources that might be required to set up the system. It was agreed that the working group would meet in Geneva about the third week of May 1993 and would report to the group at its fourteenth session. Prior to the meeting of the working group a system-wide survey of existing databases would be conducted in order to determine their relevance to water resources.

2. Water resources and urban development (agenda item 6 (b))

16. In introducing document ACC/ISGW/1992/5, entitled "Urban water supply and sanitation", the representative of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) noted the seriousness of the problems related to the urbanization process and the importance of striving towards sustainable development. The growth of urban population and productive activities were putting severe strains on the water resources and environmental protection capabilities of many cities. This called primarily for local and national interventions aimed at the strengthening of sustainable urban water resources management. In this respect, the activities of external support agencies should be targeted towards the execution of field research in partnership with local organizations; the strengthening of local authorities and service agencies; and the integration of research, development and capacity-building activities into operations and investment programmes at the local level.

17. The representative also stressed the importance of developing a common approach for the implementation of support activities by the organizations of the United Nations system. In this regard, the treatment of water resources and urban development as a distinct thematic area offered an opportunity for inter-agency coordination in crucial areas, such as the development of research, capacity-building and operational activities at the local level; country-level cooperation in the implementation of capacity-building initiatives; and the establishment of an inter-agency mechanism for monitoring progress in implementation of projects.

18. The members of the Group noted that issues pertaining to urban water supply and sanitation remained extremely serious. They stressed the need to consider various water-related issues affecting urban areas, including such issues as urban hydrology and flood prevention and mitigation, in the broader context of urban development. They also noted that the question had been given a great deal of attention within Agenda 21 and that the Intersecretariat Group should continue to formulate joint approaches and programmes for the follow-up of the recommendations contained in Agenda 21.

19. The members of the Group agreed to establish a working group under the chairmanship of Habitat and also composed of members of Habitat, WHO, the World Bank, UNESCO and UNDP, although its membership would be open to other interested member agencies. The working group was entrusted with the task of recommending options for inter-agency collaboration in implementing follow-up activities on urban water resources issues stemming from Agenda 21. Specifically, the working group would review the programmes and activities of the organizations of the United Nations system in the area of water resources and urban development and prepare a series of recommendations on options for inter-agency collaboration in that area. Its main objective would be to identify policy orientations, objectives, target groups, the scope and coverage of such programmes and activities, and their relation to the issues emerging from Agenda 21. The working group would examine priority issues concerning the provision of external support to developing countries, alternatives for the delivery of such external support, and the scope and nature of future inter-agency collaborative activities.

20. It was decided that the working group would meet in the near future to review progress in the development of the above-mentioned activities. The most likely date for such a meeting would be March 1993, either at the time of the International Conference on Hydrology, to be convened jointly by WMO, UNESCO and the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU) in Paris from 22 to 27 March, or at the time of the meeting of the Working Group on Urbanization of the Collaborative Council on Water Supply and Sanitation. It was also agreed that a report on such activities would be prepared for the next session of the Intersecretariat Group.

21. A WHO representative noted that it might be productive if this working group could establish links with similar groups such as the above-mentioned working group of the Collaborative Council and the Water in Megacities Programme of the Asian Development Bank. In this respect, the representative of UNDP also stressed the importance of avoiding duplication of efforts.

3. Water resources and rural development (agenda item 6 (c))

22. In introducing document ACC/ISGW/1992/6 concerning water resources and rural development, the FAO representative described the historical development of the Rural Water Management Programme, beginning with the Intersecretariat Group Expert Panel meeting on the comprehensive strategy for the implementation of the Mar del Plata Action Plan for the 1990s (see E/C.7/1991/8). This had resulted in the development of the International Action Programme on Water and Sustainable Agricultural Development (IAP-WASAD). Finally the Dublin Conference had provided the technical basis and laid the foundation for integrated rural water management. He presented the FAO International Cooperative Programme Framework for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (ICPF-SARD), drawing special attention to the integrated approach and attributing a central role to popular participation and human resources development. UNCED had endorsed the integrated rural water management approach and consequently this had become a formal programme of the United Nations system.

23. The FAO representative then presented the objectives and scope of the forthcoming Expert Consultation on Integrated Rural Water Management, jointly organized by FAO, WHO, UNDP, UNICEF and the World Bank, to be held at FAO headquarters in Rome from 15 to 19 March 1993. The objectives of the Expert Consultation would be to develop strategies to promote integrated rural water resources planning and development; identify priority areas for technical assistance to developing countries; and prepare guidelines for integrated rural water resources management. The Consultation would focus on three major areas: policies and planning; technologies-application, research and development; and capacity-building. The technical scope covered rural water supply and sanitation; irrigation and drainage management; wastewater treatment and reuse; and water-borne diseases. It was expected that the outcome of the Expert Consultation would provide a clearer direction to the nature of inter-agency collaboration in implementing the Programme. Perhaps there was a need to form an inter-agency working group to follow up the recommendations of the Consultation.

24. The Group expressed its strong support for the initiative and cited it as an excellent example of inter-agency cooperation. The representative from WHO pointed out the appropriateness of the Consultation, in the light of the UNCED follow-up and the integration of water supply, sanitation and health matters in the rural sector. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the United Nations University (UNU) expressed their desire to participate in the Consultation. The Department of Economic and Social Development requested that the report of the Consultation be made available for distribution in the Committee on Natural Resources.

4. The management of water resources as a basis for sustainable development (agenda item 6 (d))

25. This item was introduced by the representative of the World Bank, who explained certain delays in the finalization of his organization's comprehensive water resources policy paper. This, in turn, had delayed further development of the Water Resources Assistance Programme (WRAP) in which the World Bank was collaborating with the Department of Economic and Social Development of the United Nations Secretariat.

26. The representative of the Department of Economic and Social Development made a statement on the same subject, explaining that, although certain joint activities on aspects of integrated water resources development and management were taking place, such as the upcoming meeting on river basins management in conjunction with UNEP and UNDP in November 1992, and the proposed FAO/Department of Economic and Social Development meeting on legal and institutional aspects of water management in Mexico, none the less overall progress towards a unified approach to water resources management depended to a large extent on the outcome of the World Bank's policy paper.

27. During the discussions, members of the Group stressed that it was important to carry forward this important aspect of both the Dublin Conference and chapter 18 of Agenda 21 and requested that the agencies that had been responsible for providing the background support for the Working Group of the Dublin Conference dealing with this question (Working Group A) should develop a strategy for action concerning integrated water resources development and management.

28. It was agreed that the Department of Economic and Social Development, UNDP and the World Bank would prepare an outline of a strategy for circulation to the members of the Group. If necessary, informal consultations could take place on this topic around the time of the upcoming session of the Committee on Natural Resources (March/April 1993) and the members would try to develop a strategy for action as soon as possible.

D. Date and place of the fourteenth session of the Intersecretariat Group and election of a chairperson and vice-chairpersons

(Agenda item 8)

29. The representative of the International Research and Training Institute for Women (INSTRAW) recalled that her organization had not been able to host the second meeting of the Steering Committee for Water Supply and Sanitation and the thirteenth session of the ACC Intersecretariat Group. Accordingly, the representative of INSTRAW renewed the invitation of her organization to host the third meeting of the Steering Committee, in conjunction with the fourteenth session of the ACC Intersecretariat Group, at INSTRAW headquarters in Santo Domingo, from 6 to 8 October 1993. Given the importance of the role of women in the development, utilization and management of water resources, the Group recommended the acceptance of this invitation. However, in view of the ongoing restructuring of the United Nations Secretariat, including the review of the ACC structure, the Group might need to hold an informal or formal meeting at an earlier date, if an inter-agency response in the field of water resources were needed sooner.

II. CONCLUSIONS REACHED AND SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS ON OTHER MATTERS

A. Recent developments concerning intergovernmental processes as they are related to water resources

(Agenda item 4)

30. The representative of the Department of Economic and Social Development introduced document ACC/ISGW/1992/3, which provided a factual account of recent developments concerning the new Committee on Natural Resources. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/235 of 13 April 1992, the Committee on Natural Resources was currently composed of 24 government-nominated experts from different Member States, who possessed the necessary qualifications and professional or scientific knowledge, would act in their personal capacities and would be elected by the Economic and Social Council for a four-year term. In accordance with the same resolution, the Committee had two working groups - one on minerals and one on water resources.

31. The mandates of the Committee with regard to water resources and mineral resources remained the same as those of the Committee in its previous form. The Committee was to meet once every two years for a period of two weeks and report to the Economic and Social Council, providing policy options and recommendations. The Department of Economic and Social Development had been given responsibility for the servicing of the Committee.

32. By decision 1992/218 of 30 April 1992, the Economic and Social Council had requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Council, at its substantive session of 1992, the consolidated mandates of the new subsidiary bodies and recommendations for the programme of work of the Committee on Natural Resources. The draft provisional programme of work for the first session of the Committee and the proposed revised terms of reference had been submitted to the Council at its substantive session of 1992 in document E/1992/76. In resolution 1992/62, the Council had reaffirmed the terms of reference of the Committee on Natural Resources and approved its draft provisional programme of work. The first session of the new Committee on Natural Resources was to take place in New York, from 22 March to 2 April 1993.*

33. The representative of UNESCO pointed out that the dates of the Committee's first session overlapped with those of an International Conference on Hydrology, to be jointly convened by UNESCO, WMO and ICSU in Paris from 22 to 27 March 1993. Accordingly, it was suggested that a UNESCO or WMO representative report on the outcome of the Conference to the Committee on Natural Resources immediately after that Conference. With regard to the

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* The Committee was subsequently scheduled to meet from 29 March to 8 April 1993.

"Overview of the activities of the organizations of the United Nations system", which was the first of five documents to be prepared for submission to the next session of the Committee, the members of the Group also agreed that, in addition to the summary of meetings held during the biennium 1991-1992, member agencies would submit to the Secretary of the Group as soon as possible summaries of meetings, seminars and conferences to be held during the biennium 1993-1994, for possible inclusion in the report.

34. Regarding questions raised by the representatives of the UNCED secretariat and INSTRAW on the arrangements for making contributions to the drafting of the reports to the Committee on Natural Resources and the extent to which those documents would draw upon the material produced for the International Conference on Water and the Environment and UNCED, representatives of the Department of Economic and Social Development explained that official communications concerning participation by member agencies in the drafting of those documents would be sent to agency heads at the end of November, and they stressed that, as it was most important that member agencies work interactively on the development of these papers collaborative efforts on an informal basis could start immediately. Broadly speaking, the important thing was to have the ideas of relevant agencies as soon as possible, so that first drafts could be prepared and circulated promptly for comments and final drafts could be submitted by the end of 1992. It was further pointed out that agencies would have the opportunity to participate in the Committee meetings as observers.

35. With respect to the paper to be presented to the Committee on Natural Resources on UNCED and the relevant provisions of Agenda 21, the representative of ECA asked whether the Group should deal exclusively with the outcome of UNCED or with major water issues as a whole. It was noted that some of the reports had been defined in the last session of the Committee on Natural Resources, and thus well before the Rio de Janeiro Conference, but that it would be crucial to deal with the implications of the follow-up. The representative of the Department of Economic and Social Development drew attention to the Group's successful pattern of cooperation and its implications regarding future joint programming. She also stressed the importance of referring to the outcome of the forthcoming formation of the ACC Task Force headed by FAO.

36. The UNESCO representative noted that the paper should address the implications for all United Nations organizations, and the members of the Group agreed. The representatives of UNEP and FAO noted that their agencies were already in the process of preparing relevant documents concerning the agencies' response to the implementation of Agenda 21 and that these documents would be made available to the Department of Economic and Social Development as soon as possible.

37. In introducing the outline of a paper on human development issues and water resources development in the 1990s, the representative of the Department of Economic and Social Development pointed out that its focus on broader issues was the most useful means of taking full advantage of the future work

of the Committee. The Secretary further added that the new format would allow the proper examination of the underlying issues and the formulation of adequate solutions to the major problems perceived. The representative of Habitat noted that, as such issues had already been widely covered in other works, the main objective was to develop strategies to tackle them. The representative of FAO reinforced this view by suggesting that the relevant documents prepared for the International Conference on Water and the Environment could be drawn upon as the basis for the paper. The representative of the United Nations University (UNU) stated that the paper should also focus on the issue of water resources mismanagement as a source of environmental degradation. It was agreed that an adequate discussion of the topic would be included in one of the sections of the paper. The group agreed that the Department of Economic and Social Development would prepare a first draft on the basis of existing information and circulate it for comments before the preparation of the final draft. The representative of UNDP expressed the wish that, as UNDP had important contributions to make in this area, the first draft be circulated as soon as possible.

38. With regard to the paper on information management in the field of water resources, it was agreed that the activities concerning the possible establishment of a system-wide integrating monitoring and assessment network discussed and decided on under agenda item 6 (a) (see paras. 9-15 above) would provide the necessary material for the preparation of the report.

39. With respect to the paper on capacity-building in the field of water resources, it was agreed that UNDP should work closely with the Department of Economic and Social Development, given the former's substantial work in that area, so that the first draft of a joint paper would be ready for circulation as soon as possible.

B. World Water Day

(Agenda item 6 (e))

40. The members of the Group took note that paragraph 18.12 (p) of chapter 18 of Agenda 21, concerning freshwater resources, dealt with the consideration by the United Nations of a World Water Day. It was agreed that the Group would revert to this question following a decision by the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session.

C. Other issues requiring cooperation by the Group

(Agenda item 7)

1. Briefing note on the United Nations organizations and water (agenda item 7 (a))

41. The Secretary of the Group, in presenting a draft for an update of the briefing note prepared in 1982 (ACC/ISGW/1992/7), suggested that it was too lengthy in its present form and needed substantial editing. He suggested that a number of supporting tables contained in annex V of that document would be very useful for furthering the analytical work of the Group in its efforts to determine areas where further collaboration was needed but were not suitable for the purposes of the note. Thus, they should be deleted from the draft but kept for other uses.

42. The members of the Group agreed with the view expressed by the Secretary. In addition, they felt that the early part of the text needed to give much more emphasis to the cooperative work being carried out by organizations through the Intersecretariat Group. They felt that in a shorter form, and once edited, the briefing note would be a good background document for the Committee on Natural Resources and the intergovernmental bodies of the various organizations. Consideration could also be given to producing a glossy brochure for public information purposes from the material in the note. With regard to the tables in annex V of the note, the members of the Group envisaged the possibility of using them as a starting-point for a database on the activities of the organizations of the system.

43. It was noted that a few organizations had not yet given their contribution. They were urged to do so as early as possible, to enable the secretariat to complete its work in time for the next session of the Committee on Natural Resources.

2. Preparation of a multilingual glossary of water terms (agenda item 7 (b))

44. The representative of WMO suggested to the members of the Group that there was a need to establish a multilingual glossary of water resources terms. He indicated that a glossary of terms had been created jointly by WMO and UNESCO on the subject of hydrology and that it would be useful to have similar work undertaken in the broader field of water resources. He indicated that the lack of such a glossary had created considerable difficulties in the translation of documents for the International Conference on Water and the Environment.

45. The members of the Intersecretariat Group for Water Resources agreed on the potential usefulness of having a glossary. As a first step, it was decided that UNESCO would compile information on glossaries in water-related fields from the various organizations of the United Nations system. The

organizations would provide the relevant information by the end of February 1993. In this regard, a representative of WHO pointed out that a glossary of terms had been established for water supply and sanitation. It was agreed that UNESCO would report to the next session of the Group on the results of the survey of existing glossaries and would make recommendations on the need for future action in this respect.

3. Public information and promotion (agenda item 7 (c))

46. In introducing this agenda item the Secretary pointed out that, despite efforts in the past, water had not yet received the kind of attention it needed, and raised the question of what was to be done to improve the visibility of the sector.

47. With regard to the nature of the audience to be addressed, the representative of INSTRAW stressed the importance of defining target groups and the representative of WHO noted that it was crucial, first of all, to concentrate on what message should be formulated and, in particular, to focus on the issue of water scarcity.

48. The representative of the UNCED secretariat suggested a two-pronged strategy based on a more efficient dissemination of hard facts and a more effective effort to increase the visibility of the sector, including a greater emphasis on the underlying causes of water-related disasters. He also mentioned that the publication of periodic bulletins might prove productive in this area. The representative of the World Bank also proposed that all water-related projects should have a component for water public information and promotion. The Group discussed the compilation and periodic publication of a report on the state of the world freshwater resources as a way to promote the importance of the sector. It was recognized that the forthcoming session of the Committee on Natural Resources would provide an opportunity to bring the question to the attention of intergovernmental bodies.

4. Issues related to the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (agenda item 7 (d))

49. The representative of UNESCO introduced this item by noting that the Group should discuss how to play a more constructive role in natural disaster reduction by formally participating in the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction and by raising the issue of water-related disasters at the forthcoming session of the Committe on Natural Resources. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) supported the idea of a formal link between the Group and the Decade.

50. The representative of WMO explained that the main priority was to switch from post-disaster relief to preventive strategies. He also offered to take up this matter personally with the secretariat of the Decade in Geneva, given that his organization had been involved in the preparation and implementation

of the Decade. The representative of WHO also offered to represent the Group in possible discussions with Decade representatives in Geneva. The importance of linking the issue with the above-mentioned review of water-related databases was stressed, given the central role to be played by access to reliable data in the formulation and implementation of strategies to prevent or mitigate water-related disasters.

51. The Group requested its Chairman to send a letter to the Chairman of the Scientific and Technical Committee of the Decade, expressing its concern for the issue of water-related disasters and offering the support of the Group.

5. Other matters (agenda item 7 (e))

52. The representative of ECA made a presentation on recent efforts by ECA in collaboration with the organizations of the United Nations system and other international agencies in the field of water resources in Africa. He noted that, in response to a suggestion made by the Intersecretariat Group at its tenth and eleventh sessions that ECA take a lead role, in collaboration with other concerned agencies, in formulating a programme for coordination and harmonization of water activities in Africa, ECA had organized an inter-agency meeting in Addis Ababa in July 1992 on the coordination and harmonization of water activities in Africa on the part of all United Nations and other international agencies. The meeting in Addis Ababa had been attended by representatives of most of the United Nations organizations concerned, as well as representatives of the African Development Bank and the Lake Chad Basin Commission.

53. The meeting had made some important decisions in the field of inter-agency coordination and harmonization of water activities in Africa, and in particular had decided to create an informal Interagency Group for Water Resources Activities in Africa (IGWA). The Group would serve as the African regional counterpart of the ACC Intersecretariat Group, as was the case in other regional commissions. The meeting had adopted the terms of reference and the objectives of the Group, which would be, inter alia, to coordinate and harmonize water resources activities in Africa by its member agencies at the subregional and regional levels; to promote collaboration and joint activities and, as necessary, assist in working out modalities of implementation; and to gather, compile and disseminate information on water resources activities in Africa by the member agencies of the Group. The meeting had decided that ECA would serve as the secretariat of the Group, had identified the Nile River Basin as a priority area in which the agencies should coordinate and harmonize their efforts, and had requested ECA to collect information on future water activities in Africa by its member agencies and disseminate the information through the ECA water resources information bulletin Maji.

54. The ECA representative further noted that in November 1991 the ECA secretariat had carried out advisory and technical assistance missions to all existing transboundary river basin commissions in Africa and that, as requested, the secretariat had provided support services to those subregional

organizations. ECA routinely collaborated with all subregional and regional organizations, including the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU). ECA provided secretariat services to another subregional group, the Undugu Group, and had serviced two ministerial and two expert meetings of the Undugu Group countries within the past year alone. He further mentioned that ECA was planning to organize a conference on hydrological services in Africa in Addis Ababa in 1993, with the assistance of WMO, UNESCO, UNDP and the World Bank, and noted that ECA was willing to participate in any collaborative efforts in Africa by other organizations and United Nations bodies, particularly UNDP, the Department of Economic and Social Development, FAO, UNEP, WMO and INSTRAW.

55. The representative of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) drew the attention of the members of the Group to the work carried out by his organization on the application of isotope technology to water resources and looked forward to wider cooperation with other organizations of the system for the application of those technologies to various aspects of their work, particularly regarding the control of lake pollution, water resources development in arid and semi-arid regions, and the control of groundwater pollution. He suggested that future agendas of the Intersecretariat Group should make allowance for the exchange of information on the activities of organizations.

56. The Group agreed that while it would not be practical to engage in full-fledged exchange of information about all activities of each organization, it was important to bring to the attention of future meetings specific activities that would benefit from collaborative efforts by other organizations. This would be particularly appropriate in view of the growing importance attached to joint programming of activities. It was thus agreed that the agendas of future sessions of the Group would provide for discussion of such activities.

III. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

57. The thirteenth session of the Intersecretariat Group for Water Resources was held at United Nations Headquarters from 7 to 9 October 1992, immediately following the second meeting of the Interagency Steering Committee for Water Supply and Sanitation, also held at United Nations Headquarters on 5 and 6 October 1992.

58. The meeting was opened by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Development, who welcomed the participants on behalf of the Department of Economic and Social Development. In his introductory remarks, he stressed the seriousness of the difficult economic and social conditions world wide. World output per capita was in decline for the second year in a row, against the background of rapidly growing populations, starvation and drought, notably in Africa, not to mention the serious socio-economic problems in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. On the other hand, he also mentioned the existence of some bright spots in the world economic outlook, such as the

rapid growth of several developing countries in Asia, the improvement of the debt problem in Latin America, and the greater integration of the world economy made possible by the end of the cold war.

59. The end of the cold war had also provided a great opportunity for the United Nations to move closer towards its fundamental goal of serving its Member States through an integrated approach to the solution of human problems, in which peace and security must go hand in hand with socio-economic development. This harmonized approach was based on a political will to cooperate in all spheres and, in particular, to make full use of the comparative advantages of the different organizations of the system.

60. He called attention to the serious nature of water-related problems by noting that over 1 billion people, or more than a fifth of the world population, lacked access to an adequate supply of drinking water and to sanitation. He also noted several other serious water-related problems, such as the catastrophic drought in southern Africa, the dire shrinking of the Aral Sea in the former Soviet Union and the potential for military conflict in shared river basins. Those problems reinforced both the need for all parties concerned to work together towards solutions and the usefulness of the Group as a model of cooperation for the rest of the United Nations system.

61. The Under-Secretary-General noted that the first stage of the restructuring of the United Nations had streamlined the Secretariat and enhanced its capacity to act in a comprehensive multidisciplinary manner, with immediate benefits for developing countries as a whole. The next stage of the restructuring would involve greater harmonization of Headquarters and the regional commissions. The final stage would focus on greater collaboration between Headquarters and the specialized agencies with a view to creating a more efficient and effective system.

62. After acknowledging the valuable contributions of the Group to the work of the organizations of the system in recent years, and noting in particular the convening of the International Conference on Water and the Environment and the joint contribution towards the drafting of chapter 18 of Agenda 21 concerning freshwater resources, the Under-Secretary-General concluded by expressing his appreciation for the long history of effective cooperation demonstrated by the various organizations involved in the Group. He finally expressed his determination to continue providing departmental support to the Intersecretariat Group.

Annex I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Chairman: Swayne SCOTT (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations)

Secretary: Pierre Najlis (Department of Economic and Social Development)

United Nations

Department of Economic and Social Development	Dunja Pastizzi-Ferencic K. Anthony Edwards Lowell Flanders Frederico Neto
United Nations Children's Fund	Brendan Doyle
United Nations Development Programme	Michael Saks
United Nation Environment Programme	Habib El-Habr Walter Rast
Economic Commission for Africa	Azm Fazlul Hoque
Economic Commission for Western Asia	Omar Touqan
United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)	Jorge Gavidia
International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women	Borjana Bulajich
United Nations Conference on Environment and Development	Richard Helmer
United Nations University	Bede N. Okigbo

Specialized agencies and related organizations

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	Swayne Scott Arumungam Kandiah
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	Andras Szollosi-Nagy

World Health Organization	Dennis B. Warner Greg Watters Ranjith Wirasinha
The World Bank	Geoffrey Mathews
World Meteorological Organization	John Rodda
International Atomic Energy Agency	Yuecel Yurtsever

Annex II

AGENDA

1. Opening of the session.

2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.

3. Report of the second meeting of the Steering Committee for Water Supply and Sanitation to the thirteenth session of the Group.

4. Recent developments concerning intergovernmental processes as they are related to water resources (Committee on Natural Resources, etc.).

5. Strengthening of coordination and cooperation in the field of water resources:

   (a) Review of the work of the Steering Committee for Water Supply and Sanitation and of the Intersecretariat Group for Water Resources;

   (b) Cooperation with external support agencies, non-governmental organizations and other organizations.

6. Follow-up action on issues stemming from the International Conference on Water and the Environment, and the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development:

   (a) Monitoring and assessing the world's freshwater resources;

   (b) Water resources and urban development;

   (c) Water resources and rural development;

   (d) The management of water resources as a basis for sustainable development;

   (e) World Water Day.

7. Other issues requiring cooperation by the Group:

   (a) Briefing note on the United Nations organizations and water;

   (b) Preparation of a multilingual glossary of water terms;

   (c) Public information and promotion;

   (d) Issues related to the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction;

   (e) Other matters.

8. Date and place of the fourteenth session of the Intersecretariat Group and election of chairperson and vice-chairpersons.

9. Adoption of the report on the thirteenth session.

Annex III

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Document number	Title or description
ACC/ISGW/1992/1	Agenda of the thirteenth session of the ACC Intersecretariat Group for Water Resources
ACC/ISGW/1992/2	Programme of work of the thirteenth session of the ACC Intersecretariat Group for Water Resources
ACC/ISGW/1992/3	Recent developments concerning intergovernmental processes as they are related to water resources
ACC/ISGW/1992/4	Integrated monitoring of basic indicators on the state of the world's freshwater resources: a proposal for system-wide action
ACC/ISGW/1992/5	Urban water supply and sanitation
ACC/ISGW/1992/6	Water resources and rural development
ACC/ISGW/1992/7	Draft update of the "Briefing note on the United Nations organizations and water"

Annex IV

PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE FOURTEENTH SESSION OF THE ACC INTERSECRETARIAT GROUP FOR WATER RESOURCES

1. Opening of the session.

2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.

3. Outcome of the first session of the Committee on Natural Resources and of other relevant intergovernmental bodies.

4. Report of the Steering Committee for Water Supply and Sanitation.

5. Strengthening of cooperation and coordination in the field of water resources:

   (a) Review of the work of the Steering Committee for Water Supply and Sanitation, and of the Intersecretariat Group;

   (b) Cooperation with external support agencies, non-governmental organizations and other organizations.

6. Follow-up action stemming from the International Conference on Water and the Environment and the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development:

   (a) Information management:

   (i) Monitoring and assessment of information on the freshwater resources of the world;

   (ii) Information management and capacity-building at the country level;

   (b) Water resources and urban development;

   (c) Water resources and rural development;

   (d) The management of water resources as a basis for sustainable development.

7. Other issues requiring cooperation by the Group:

   (a) Specific activities of member organizations requiring the attention of the Group;

   (b) Technological advances of interest to the members of the Group;

   (c) Preparation by the Group of a multilingual glossary of water terms;

   (d) Other matters.

8. Public information and promotion, including World Water Day.

9. Date and place of the fifteenth session of the Intersecretariat Group, and nominations for the positions of chairperson and vice-chairpersons.

10. Adoption of the report on the fourteenth session.